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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 19 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and has the honour to remind the latter that the Government of Norway has put forth its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2009-2012 in the election to be held in May 2009.

With reference to its note verbale dated 8 August 2007, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Permanent Mission of Norway is pleased to attach a specific set of pledges and commitments to underscore Norway's own continuing commitment to human rights and how it will aim to contribute to the work of the Council if elected (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 19 March 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Aide-memoire on the candidature of Norway for the Human Rights Council

Strong supporter of the UN

Norway has consistently supported the United Nations and is one of the three largest voluntary contributors to UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA and UNEP. Norway is the second largest voluntary donor to the OHCHR and has steadily increased its un-earmarked contributions.

Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance

Global poverty is our greatest human rights challenge today. Promoting human rights must therefore include fighting global poverty. Norway takes this task seriously and is making a record-high contribution by allocating one per cent of its gross national income to international development cooperation in 2009. Norway has taken a human rights-based approach to development cooperation, focusing particularly on the right to health and education for all.

Development assistance alone cannot lift large groups of people out of poverty. Global and regional frameworks play a decisive role in creating peace and stability, promoting economic development, investment and trade, and dealing with migration, environmental problems, climate change and health challenges.

The Norwegian Government will focus on areas where Norway has most to contribute:

i) climate change, the environment and sustainable development
ii) peace building, human rights and humanitarian assistance
iii) oil and clean energy
iv) women and gender equality
v) good governance and the fight against corruption.

Norway is a nation of peace. Norway's efforts to prevent, reduce and resolve conflicts must be seen in connection with its significant humanitarian commitments, the assistance it provides to countries in transition from war to peace, its commitment to long-term development cooperation and its promotion of human rights.

The white paper *On Equal Terms: Women's rights and gender equality in international development policy* was launched in 2008. It sets out the following main thematic priority areas: women's political and economic empowerment; reproductive health and rights; and violence against women.

National human rights policy

Norway is a State Party to six UN human rights conventions in force and to most of their additional protocols, and has passed legislation implementing them in Norwegian law. Norway has further signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and we intend to ratify these instruments as soon as the necessary national legislation has been adopted. Norway was the first to ratify ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and among the first to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Norway cooperates fully with the treaty monitoring bodies by complying with their reporting requirements and implementing their decisions.

Norway has issued a standing invitation to all United Nations Special Procedures mandate holders.

The protection and care of children continue to be a key Norwegian policy priority. Implementing child rights requires child-friendly policies both at the national and international level.

The rights of indigenous peoples are of key importance. Norway actively supported the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration sets a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect. We will do this in partnership with the Sami people in Norway, who are recognised as indigenous peoples by the Norwegian Government.

Norway is in the forefront with regard to making women's rights and gender equality a cross-cutting issue and an objective in itself.

Norway is working actively to strengthen the role of the UN as a promoter of peace, human rights and development. We are doing this in many different ways: by supporting the Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Peacebuilding Fund, by promoting the UN's gender equality efforts, by supporting pilot projects to establish "One UN" at country level, by promoting the integration of humanitarian and development considerations into UN peacekeeping operations, and by supporting further reform in the humanitarian field.

Norway is strongly committed to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Norway has taken the lead in efforts to reach MDG 4 on reducing child mortality, MDG 5 on improving maternal health and MDG 6 on combating HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases. Norway's efforts to combat child mortality include support for vaccination through the GAVI Alliance and support for vaccine research.

Voluntary pledges and commitments of Norway (based on the General Assembly resolution 60/251)

Pledges- Cooperation, inclusiveness and mutual respect

Human rights are a cornerstone of Norwegian foreign and development policy. Norway attaches great importance to the work of the Human Rights Council and consider it essential in efforts to further human rights worldwide. Norway is seeking membership on the Human Rights Council for the period 2009-2012.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Norway will continue its commitment to working actively through engagement and dialogue, and in a spirit of cooperation, inclusiveness and mutual respect, to ensure that the Council functions as a credible, effective and operative tool in the UN machinery to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. We will also promote the role of the Universal Periodic Review as a mechanism for increased cooperation on the fulfilment of all human rights.